

## **Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting**

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1Title:	Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting
Lesson Purpose:	To present to the student tactically sound ground defense, control, and escape techniques using gross motor skills that will enable the student to effectively defend, control, and/or escape a ground assault.
Training Objectives:	<p>At the end of this block of instruction, the participant will be able to achieve the following objectives in accordance with information received during the instructional period.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Examine the force option concept.</li><li>2. Critique the concepts of reasonableness and perception as they relate to force option selection.</li><li>3. Differentiate the differences between less lethal and lethal force options.</li><li>4. Demonstrate the following control techniques:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Tackle Block</li><li>b) Wrist Wrap/Defeating the Grab</li><li>c) Guard Position (closed)</li><li>d) Straight Arm Bar</li><li>e) Single Leg Takedown</li><li>f) Blocking from the Ground</li><li>g) Side Control</li><li>h) Side Control to Handcuff</li></ol></li><li>5. Demonstrate the following escape techniques:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Escape from Mount Position</li><li>b) Guard-to-Stand</li><li>c) Break “bear hugs” from a variety of positions</li><li>d) Break guillotine chokes from a standing and a suspect’s guard position</li></ol></li><li>6. Demonstrate the following weapon retention techniques:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Arm Bar from the Guard</li><li>b) Retention from Full Mount</li><li>c) Retention from Side-Mount (non-gun side)</li><li>d) Retention from Side-Mount (gun side)</li></ol></li></ol>
Hours:	Four (4)
Instructional Method:	Lecture/Demonstration/Practical Exercise

## Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting

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Materials Required:	Lesson Plan Pen/Pencil/Paper
Training Aids:	Computer/Projector PowerPoint Slides Gymnastic Mats Handcuffs/Keys Red Guns Duty Belt
References:	<p>Burhmaster, Scott. "Ground Fighting." [On-line]. Available at: <a href="http://www.policeone.com">http://www.policeone.com</a> [June 2009].</p> <p>Combs, John E. <i>Specialized Subject Control and Arrest Techniques Instructor Training Manual</i>. Salemburg, NC: North Carolina Justice Academy, 2005.</p> <p>Clancy, Jeff and Jim Wagner. "How to Turn Sport Grappling into Street Grappling." <i>Black Belt</i>, August 2003.</p> <p>Dunston, Mark S. "Ground Fighting: Assaults on Police Officers" (lecture given at the ASLET International Training Conference, February 2001), Orlando, FL.</p> <p>Georgia Peace Officer Training Council. <i>Defensive Tactics</i>.</p> <p>Gracie, Carlson, Jr. "Law Enforcement Ground Fighting" (lecture given at training seminars, 2001), North Carolina.</p> <p>"Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted." U.S. Department of Justice: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2005. [Online]. Available at: <a href="http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/killed/2005/table14.htm">http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/killed/2005/table14.htm</a> [June 2009].</p> <p>McGuinness, J. Michael. "Judging Split Second Decisions." <i>Police Magazine</i>, January 2000.</p> <p>Nance, Richard. "You Can't Survive on Technique Alone." [On-line]. Available at: <a href="http://www.officer.com/web/online/Operations-and-Tactics/How-Effective-are-Your-Defensive-Tactics/3\$41887">http://www.officer.com/web/online/Operations-and-Tactics/How-Effective-are-Your-Defensive-Tactics/3\$41887</a> [June 2009].</p> <p>Perticaro, Anthony. "Inside the Ground Fight with Tony Blauer." <i>SPEARtips</i>. Vol. 1, Issue 1. October 22, 2003. [On-line]. Available at: <a href="http://www.imakenews.com/blauertactical">http://www.imakenews.com/blauertactical</a> [June 2009].</p>

## **Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting**

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Smith, Larry. "Use of Force." *Use of Force Instructor Certification Manual*. Twin Lakes, WI: National Criminal Justice Training Council, March 2002.

Smith, Dave and Elizabeth Bratner. "Mental Preparation." *Law and Order*, April 2000.

U.S. Department of Justice. *Use of Force by Police*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 1999.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security. *Use of Force*. Glynco, GA: Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, January 2006.

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Instructor/Coordinator  
NC Justice Academy

Date Prepared:

June 2009

## Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting

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Title: Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting – **Instructor Notes**

1. This in-service lesson plan must be presented by an instructor currently certified by the North Carolina Criminal Justice Education and Training Standards Commission as a “Specialized Subject Control & Arrest Techniques Instructor.” Certification through the North Carolina Sheriff’s Education and Training Standards Commission as a “Specialized Subject Control & Arrest Techniques Instructor” will also satisfy this requirement.
2. It is further recommended that any instructor or assistant instructor having teaching responsibilities during this course, successfully complete the requirements for the *Basic and Advanced Ground Defense Instructor Training Program*.
3. This course requires lecture and demonstration on the part of the instructor and practice on the part of the student. It is recommended that the student practice the techniques until deemed proficient by the instructor.
4. Arrangements must be made for an area suitable for this type of activity, complete with protective mats to reduce the chance of physical injury.
5. It is recommended that students participate in a physical conditioning program prior to ground defense training, such as resistance training for muscular strength and endurance, and regular cardiovascular and stretching routines. In addition, ground defense training courses should entail a proper protocol of warm-up and cool-down stretching exercises.
6. Students should wear loose fitting clothing with long pants or sweats and proper foot gear for lateral movement support.
7. It is recommended that special training handguns (i.e., Red Guns) be used for this course. **No functional firearms, ammunition, or chemical aerosol sprays should ever be allowed in any training environment!**
8. The lesson plan typically outlines the techniques using the officer’s right side. All techniques, however, should be taught and practiced from the officer’s left and right side for proficiency.
9. Instructors should ensure that students train with the same duty gear and equipment that they will use while on duty.
10. Ground defense safety rules:  
  
Ground defense techniques have the potential to cause injury if performed in a haphazard manner. To minimize the risk of injury, the following safety precautions should be observed in training situations:
  - a) Remove all watches, rings, glasses, and other jewelry that might be snagged during training.

## **Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting**

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- b) No “horseplay.” Practice only what is taught and demonstrated.
  - c) All techniques must be practiced *slowly at first*. Speed and proficiency will come with continued practice.
  - d) During application of the techniques, only *passive resistance* should be offered. Active resistance can cause injury and impede training.
  - e) Students should not be allowed to participate in any *dynamic* or *confrontational* drills until they have demonstrated basic technique proficiency as determined by the instructor.
11. It is recommended that there be at *minimum*, a one to eight (1:8) instructor to student ratio for this type of training.

# Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting

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Title: Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting

## I. Introduction

**NOTE: Show slide, “Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting.” Greet class, introduce yourself, and provide a brief background.**

### A. Opening Statement

Law enforcement officers have to be prepared for assaults of all kinds and from all directions, to include ground assaults. Law enforcement officers do not have the luxury of being able to prepare for weeks or months in advance for a particular type of confrontation. Therefore, it is vitally important that we train for “worst case scenario” events, and are prepared to respond. A part of this training is ground defense. This training program is not intended to replace or supercede any tactically sound, street-relevant defensive tactics program or other motor skill development. Rather, it is intended to be a supplemental addition to a full defensive tactics/physical fitness regimen.

According to Richard Nance (Officer.com), many martial arts-based techniques work well in the training environment; when the officer’s partner reacts to the pain stimulus, the techniques seem to be effective. However, many officers are in for a rude awakening when they employ these techniques on a suspect who does not respond the way their training partner did, because the suspect is under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or is impervious to pain for any number of reasons. In a sense, learning these martial arts-based techniques can actually endanger an officer by fostering a false sense of security.

### B. Training Objectives

**NOTE: Show slides, “Training Objectives.”**

### C. Reasons

There has been increased concern about the ability of officers to control or escape an assault from the ground, or to defeat an attempt to take an officer to the ground. According to a survey conducted by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), approximately 63 percent of officer altercations end up on the ground, to include officer-initiated suspect grounding. With this in mind, it is becoming of paramount concern that officers become adept at defeating ground assaults.

According to Policeone.com, odds are strong that, at some point, a fight will go to the ground, either by your direction during the process of controlling a subject or against your will in the midst of an attack. Given this, your safety and survival can depend on your ability to navigate a ground fight.

## Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting

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### II. Body

#### A. Use of Force

**NOTE: Show slide, “Use of Force.”**

The use of force by law enforcement is an issue of great concern to society, individual officers, and administrators alike. By law, force may be used while performing official duties. Determining the proportion of force to use in a particular case is often subjective judgment based on unspecific standards. State laws, departmental rules, and agency procedures are intended to define more clearly those standards of professional behavior which will benefit the public and the law enforcement officer.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) defines “**use of force**” as:

*“The amount of force required by police to compel compliance by an unwilling subject.”<sup>1</sup>*

Current training trends divide force into two distinct categories: less lethal and lethal.

**NOTE: Show slide, “Less Lethal Force.”**

*“A less lethal force option is one which is highly unlikely to cause death or serious injury to a suspect when properly applied by a law enforcement officer.”<sup>2</sup>*

#### 1. Use of force in arrest, N.C.G.S. 15A-401<sup>3</sup>

- a) To prevent the escape from custody or to effect an arrest of a person who he reasonably believes has committed a criminal offense, unless he knows that the arrest is unauthorized; or
- b) To defend himself or a third person from what he reasonably believes to be the use or imminent use of physical force while effecting or attempting to effect an arrest or while preventing or attempting to prevent an escape.

#### 2. When can lethal force be used?<sup>4</sup>

**NOTE: Show slide, “Lethal Force.”**

- a) To defend himself/herself or a third person from what he/she reasonably believes to be the use or **imminent use** of deadly physical force
- b) To effect an arrest or to prevent the escape from custody of a person who he/she reasonably believes is attempting to escape by means of a deadly weapon, **or who by his/her conduct or any other means**

## Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting

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**indicates** that he/she presents **an imminent threat** of death or serious physical injury to others unless apprehended without delay

- c) To prevent the escape of a person from custody imposed upon him/her as a result of conviction for a felony (This situation primarily applies to correctional officers in preventing an escape from prison)

**NOTE: North Carolina law does not permit the use of lethal force against a person accused or suspected of committing a crime who is attempting to escape from custody or arrest unless his/her conduct presents an immediate threat of death or serious injury. "Use of force" law does not justify willful, malicious, or criminally negligent conduct by any person which injures or endangers any person or property, nor does the law excuse or justify the use of unreasonable or excessive force.**

- B. *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386 (1989)<sup>5</sup>

**NOTE: Show slide, "Reasonableness . . . *Graham v. Connor*."**

- 1. *"The test of reasonableness under the 4th Amendment is not capable of a precise definition or mechanical application . . . Its proper application requires careful attention to the facts of each particular case, including the severity of the crime at issue, whether the suspect poses an immediate threat to the officer or others and whether or not he is actively resisting arrest or attempting to evade arrest by flight. . . ."*

*"The reasonableness of a particular use of force must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight. . . ."*

*"The calculus of reasonableness must embody allowance for the fact that police officers are often forced to make split-second judgments—in circumstances that are tense, uncertain and rapidly evolving—about the amount of force that is necessary in a particular situation."*

- a) Reasonableness must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, coping with a tense, fast-evolving situation.
- b) Decisions must be based on the totality of the circumstances and how they are evolving at the time of the incident.
- c) Determining the amount of force required to control a subject requires sound decision making by the officer. Crucial to this ability is the officer's understanding of the force options and the reasonableness of the force option(s) used.

- 2. Perception



## Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting

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**NOTE: Show slides, “Perception.”**

Essential to the officer’s understanding of force options is an examination of “perception.” In selecting force options, an officer’s perception of what is taking place is critical. Officers must look at each situation, or the “totality of the circumstances,” and continually assess, plan, and act. What one officer may perceive as a threat, another may not due to any number of factors. This means that when the reasonableness of an officer’s actions is being questioned, we must place ourselves in the position of that officer at the moment of decision. Reasonableness is not determined by any particular force option(s) but rather all of the surrounding circumstances that caused the officer to make the decision on the force option(s).

The elements of “objective reasonableness” listed below are based on the officer’s perception of the subject’s actions.<sup>6</sup>

**NOTE: Show slide, “Elements of Objective Reasonableness.”**

- a) Ability/Capability – Addresses the ability/capability of a subject to carry out the action or threat. This must be a logical perception.
- b) Opportunity – Indicates that the action or threat perceived by the officer is imminent. The subject must be in a position in which they can use their *ability/capability* to carry out the act or threat.
- c) Intent – Indicates the mental state initiating an overt act (words or deeds). Intent is initiating an overt act in furtherance of a crime or threat.

### 3. Principles of subject control<sup>7</sup>

**NOTE: Show slide, “Principles.”**

- a) As the officer formulates a plan to physically control a subject, he must be committed. Actions must be swiftly executed with maximum force and speed, increasing the likelihood of success and avoiding a prolonged, unpredictable confrontation. After a technique is attempted and fails, it is much less likely to work a second time because the subject has an opportunity to formulate defensive countermeasures.
- b) Anticipate that one technique will not completely control the subject. Work in combinations and have a follow-up plan.
- c) The primary objective in handling violent situations is to control the subject as quickly and effectively as possible. The longer a confrontation lasts, the more dangerous it becomes for the officer, the public, and the subject.

## Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting

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- d) Always be mindful that once control is achieved, the force should be reduced to a level that will simply maintain it.

### C. Force Option Model<sup>8</sup>

**NOTE: Show slide, “Force Options.”**

A force option model should be used as a *guide* for officers in their use of force decisions. These decisions should be based upon generally accepted responses to use of force situations.

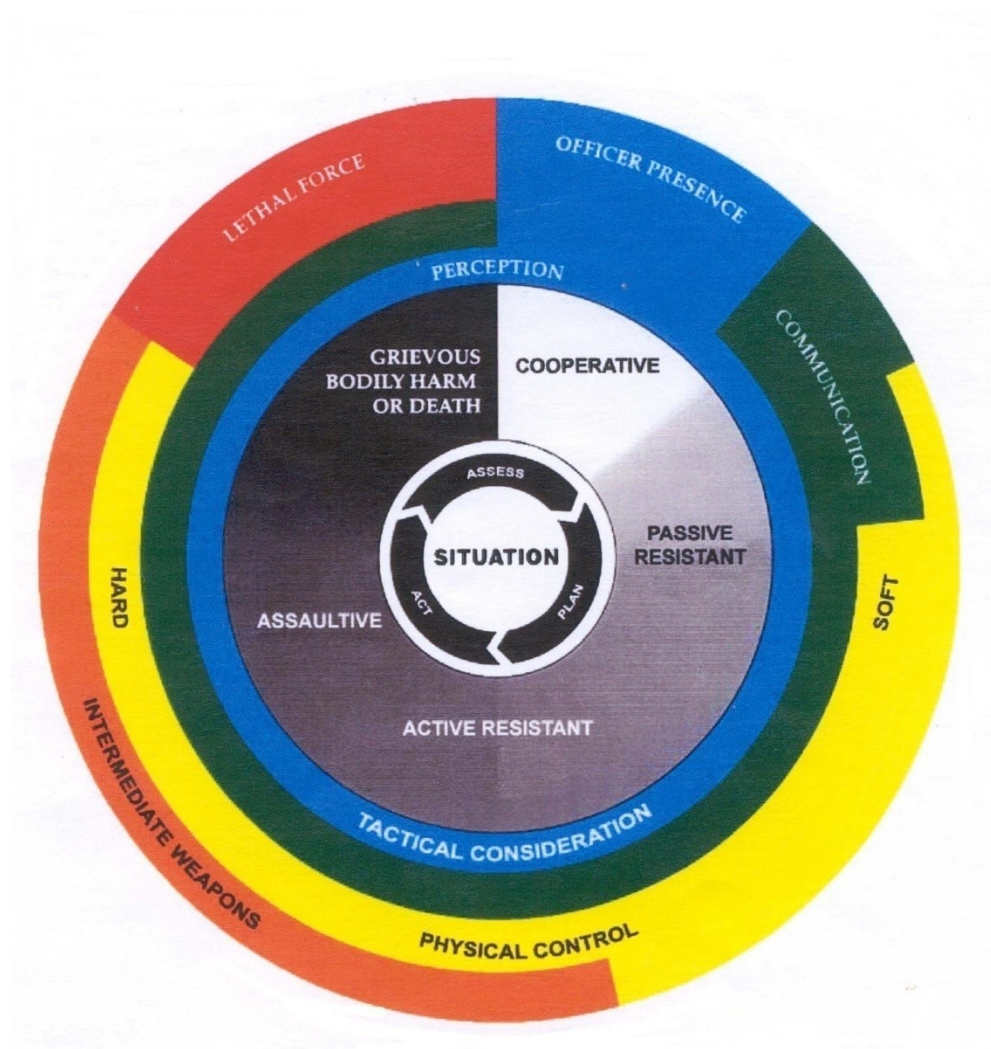
Determining the appropriate amount of force to use when confronting a resistive subject can be problematic for the officer. Frequently, policies are ambiguous in directing the officer in the appropriate amount of force to use.

While it is certainly advantageous for an officer to resolve a confrontation with verbal direction, it is at the point where words no longer serve to de-escalate a confrontation, and force must be used, that many standard policies and guidelines become vague.

**NOTE: Instructors should thoroughly explain the force option model. In particular, instructors should explain this model from the inside-out, taking care to point out that there is not a clear line distinguishing when a suspect moves from one level of resistance to another. And, that the color areas representing force options overlap one another based on the same premise.**

## Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting

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Most use of force options are listed from the least life-threatening to the most life-threatening. The appearance of a hierarchy or specific order to employ any force option is unintended. The systematic listing of force options is only done to clarify and illustrate the variety of applications. The “continuum,” as it is sometimes called, **IS NOT** a specific path for officers to follow in every situation. Any perceived pecking order or tier has nothing to do with the officer’s individual processes for choosing the most reasonable option. In *Scott v. Henrich* (39 F.3d. 912; 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit - 1994) the court said:

*“Requiring officers to find and choose the least intrusive alternative would require them to exercise superhuman judgment. In the heat of battle with lives potentially in the balance, an officer would not be able to rely on training and common sense to decide what would best accomplish his mission. Instead, he would need to ascertain the least intrusive alternative*

## Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting

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*(an inherently subjective determination) and choose that option and that option only. Imposing such a requirement would inevitably induce tentativeness by officers, and thus deter police from protecting the public and themselves. It would also entangle the courts in endless second-guessing of police decisions made under stress and subject to the exigencies of the moment.”*

Officers thus need not avail themselves of the least intrusive means of responding to an exigent situation; they need only act within that range of conduct we identify as reasonable. Simply stated, officers do not have to exhaust other lower levels of force options before moving to another, so long as it is justified.

**The evaluation tool used by the court is, “Did the officer act as other reasonable officers would have acted in a similar situation?”** (*Graham v. Connor* [490 U.S. 386, 1989])

The force options listed below are a guide and do not follow a preset order. An officer’s decision to use force should always be determined by the “*totality of the circumstances*,” to include, but is not limited to, suspect behavior(s), officer skill levels, environmental conditions, etc. Officers should continually assess, plan, and act so as to apply the most appropriate use of force option(s).

### D. Control Levels

**NOTE: The instructor should provide various examples of the involved factors of each level of the continuum as they are presented to the student.**

**NOTE: Show slide, “Control Levels.”**

1. Presence: Psychological force established through the officer’s arrival on the scene and symbols of authority (badge, uniform, etc.). Officer positioning, stance, and use of a reaction zone aid in the control of confrontations and facilitate officer safety.
2. Verbal Direction/Control: Conversation, advice, commands, or instructions utilized by the officer to control or de-escalate a confrontation. Verbal communication, when applicable, should accompany officer actions, including the officer’s identification and announcement of arrest as outlined in N.C.G.S. 15A-401(c)(2).
3. Physical Control: Use of physical contact to include touching, assisting, grabbing, joint manipulations, kicking, or striking. Such contact includes empty hand techniques and does not include the use of intermediate weapons.
  - a) Soft hand control –Techniques which have a low probability of injury, such as joint locks and pressure points

## **Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting**

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Note: Stunning techniques to the neck (brachial plexus origin, suprascapular nerve) are appropriate in cases of aggressive assault and high level resistance of a manner that approaches a threat to the officer's life.

- b) Hard hand control –Techniques which have a higher probability of injury from personal weapons, such as punches, kicks, or stuns
4. Aerosol/Chemical Agents: The use of Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) or other agents to control suspect resistance. Agents typically target suspect's facial area, cause moderate discomfort, activate mucus membranes, and reduce resistance.

Note: The use of an aerosol chemical agent, such as OC pepper spray, has a legitimate place in force option selection. Exact placement may be dictated by departmental policy. Individual agency policy may provide for the use of OC pepper spray before any touching or "soft hand" techniques under specified circumstances, **or** may require the use or attempted use of "soft hand" techniques before spraying if circumstances permit.

5. Electronic Impulse Device (EID): Also known as "stun gun" or TASER, these devices deploy electronic currents (low watt, high volts) into a suspect's body. This affects the central nervous system and causes muscles to involuntarily contract, thereby decreasing or eliminating suspect resistance.

Note: The use of an electronic impulse device (EID) has a legitimate place in force option selection. Exact placement may be dictated by departmental policy. Individual agency policy may provide for the use of an electronic impulse device before any touching or "soft hand" techniques under specified circumstances, **or** may require the use or attempted use of "soft hand" techniques before deploying if circumstances permit.

6. Intermediate Weapons: Weapons which, when utilized according to recognized training methods, reduce the probability of serious bodily injury.
- a) Low-level intermediate weapons –Weapons used with slow pressure not requiring dynamic impact or physical exertion (Example: using a baton to effect a joint lock)
  - b) High-level intermediate weapons – Weapons which involve strikes or could cause temporary physical incapacitation when applied (Example: baton strike)

Note: Placement of particular intermediate weapons in force option selection may vary from agency to agency depending upon respective guidelines.

## Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting

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7. Lethal Force: Actions which would likely result in death or serious bodily injury including the use of lethal weapons.

Note: The force option selection model is a guide. An officer's use of force is a response to the subject's behavior and does not specifically follow a preset order of escalation or de-escalation. An officer must continually assess a subject's behavior to allow for appropriate escalation/de-escalation in the use of force.

**NOTE: The instructor should provide practical examples or relate actual situations in which sequential use of levels are not followed.**

**Example: An officer encounters a subject armed with a handgun. Officer presence has been established and the officer might begin utilizing verbal commands. The officer would not engage in physical controls, nor would he employ the use of an intermediate weapon such as a baton strike. The officer should seek appropriate cover and prepare to utilize lethal force as assessed from the subject's behavior.**

### E. Use of Force Variables

**NOTE: Show slide, "Force Variables."**

The amount of force an officer employs in effecting control or defending himself/herself is generally guided by **the totality of the surrounding circumstances**, including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Subject behavior – physical and verbal actions, signs of impairment
2. Totality of the circumstances – known factors
3. Environmental conditions – lighting, location, weather, terrain
4. Reaction time/distance from subject – effective response
5. Multiple subjects/officers
6. Size and gender of the officer and subject
7. Skill level of officer – physical ability/condition, training level
8. Apparent skill level of suspect – physical appearance, demonstrated ability
9. Age of subject/officer
10. Injury or exhaustion – physical impairment of officer
11. Weapon availability – officer's issued weapons, weapons in the immediate area

## Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting

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12. Availability of alternative actions – disengagement, use of multiple officers
13. Previous knowledge of subject – previous behavior, use/possession of weapons

### F. Types of Subject Behavior/Resistance Levels<sup>9</sup>

**NOTE: Show slide, “Resistance Levels.”**

As stated earlier, officers are rarely required to use force. However, when force is used, several types of suspect resistance patterns emerge. Research suggests that suspects resist in predictable fashion. Knowing this could prove useful when applying use of force options.

In 1997, the National Institute for Justice conducted research on the type of force used by police (and against police). Six agencies participated in the study, including the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department. Approximately 7,500 arrest situations were analyzed.

1. The **most common type of suspect resistance** (non-weapon) was wrestling, followed by pushing/shoving.
2. The **most common level of force used by police** (non-weapon) was grabbing, followed by wrestling.
3. Suspects possessed a weapon in 52 arrest situations; the most common weapon was a knife.
4. The most common force option weapon used by police was a chemical agent, followed by a flashlight.

**“Excessive use of force comes from repeatedly trying to apply ineffective control techniques.” — Masaad Ayoob**

### G. Ground Fighting: Assaults on Police Officers<sup>10</sup>

**NOTE: Show slide, “Statistics.”**

The following data are from a project/survey conducted by Calibre Press and PPCT Management Systems in which over 1,000 law enforcement officers from various federal, state, and local agencies across the country were surveyed as to the extent of their involvement in, and the circumstances surrounding, ground attacks.

1. **52%** responded that an assailant had attempted to take them to the ground, with **60%** of those attempts being **successful**.
  - a) 85% were pushed, pulled, or tackled
  - b) 15% were struck or kicked



## **Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting**

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2. Once the officer and/or suspect was on the ground:
  - a) **64%** of assailants **continued to attack**
    - (1) 77% grappled and pinned officers' shoulders
    - (2) 66% continued with punches
  - b) 31% ran away
  - c) 5% waited
3. **21%** of attackers attempted to disarm the officer, with **5%** being **successful**
4. In **13%** of attacks, officers faced multiple attackers
5. **95%** of officers responded with non-lethal force
  - a) 29% used OC aerosol
  - b) 26% used impact weapons
  - c) 24% used personal weapons
  - d) Firearms were used 13 times, with 3 fatalities
6. Officers were injured **26%** of the time; suspects were injured 42% of the time
7. The ground attacks took place:
  - a) 45% during field interviews
  - b) 40% during handcuffing
  - c) 10% during escorting
  - d) 5% during booking
8. Officers landed:
  - a) 30% landed on their back
  - b) 20% landed on their stomach
  - c) 50% landed on their side
9. Officers landed relative to their attacker:



## Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting

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- a) 38% landed to the side of the attacker
- b) 42% landed on top of the attacker
- c) 20% landed underneath the attacker

The above statistics should be a red flag to any law enforcement professional that harbors any doubt as to the importance of having the basic skills necessary to defend against or escape from a ground attack. The key for officers to attain and retain these basic skills is to train hard, train realistically on gross motor skills in situations they are likely to face, and to keep it simple!

**“Anyone can learn to fight. It’s hard to teach character, desire, and toughness.”— George T. Williams**

**NOTE: Show slide, “You will need a combat mind-set, or else all of your techniques will fail.” —Ricardo Murgel**

### H. Basic Ground Defense Techniques

As a technique of control, taking someone to the ground has certain advantages. However, in all cases, **going to the ground should be on the officer’s terms**, not the subject’s.

1. Being on the ground can be a dangerous place for the officer because it can take away some mobility and strength.
2. Taking a subject to the ground can cause an imbalance in his/her defenses, in addition to a physical stun, as he/she strikes the ground.
3. Afterward, the officer has the option to disengage or move to another force option(s). Without basic skills to either control or escape, the officer is at a distinct disadvantage.<sup>11</sup>
4. The following techniques for this course have been selected by the North Carolina Justice Academy’s statewide committee of subject matter experts, based upon their simplicity, effectiveness, and relevance to the needs of law enforcement officers. Although, certainly not exhaustive, the techniques are all based upon gross motor skills and cover a wide spectrum of escape and control maneuvers. **The initial descriptions of the techniques are for a right hand dominant officer. However, officers must be proficient with all techniques from the left and right side.**

Although the techniques are generally reliable and conducive to being performed under stress, officers need to remember that **no technique is 100 percent effective on all suspects all the time**. Failure to continually train and practice officer survival tactics can and does lead to officer assaults, injuries, and deaths. **CRITICAL SKILLS ARE PERISHABLE SKILLS!**

## Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting

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### I. Control Techniques

The following techniques can be used for the officer to prevent an assailant from gaining a position of advantage, and for the officer to gain and/or maintain a position of tactical advantage. If the officer is not able to gain **immediate** tactical advantage, the primary goal should be to escape the threat and re-evaluate use of force options.

#### 1. Tackle Block

- a) As the assailant lunges or reaches for the officer, the officer applies a defensive grip/stance on the duty weapon.
- b) The officer then lunges with the left arm under the suspect's arm and down toward the suspect's lower abdomen, so that the officer's upper arm/shoulder is against the suspect's arm pit.
- c) In this position, the officer should have the suspect's arm trapped between his/her torso and inside upper arm.
- d) With the weapon side foot, the officer should step back at about a 45 degree angle, keeping the suspect's arm trapped.
- e) The officer can then force the suspect to the ground by applying pressure and leverage to the suspect's shoulder.

#### 2. Wrist Wrap/Defeating the Grab

- a) As the suspect grabs the officer at or around the upper arms, the officer will reach over the top of the suspect's hand, trapping same at the back of the hand/wrist.
- b) The officer, using both hands to trap the suspect's right hand (officer's little finger pointing toward his/her chest), will apply downward pressure to the suspect's hand.
- c) As the pressure is applied, the officer will lower his/her center of gravity and step back, forcing the suspect to the ground.

#### 3. Guard Position (closed)

- a) Officer is on his/her back and has suspect trapped between his/her legs, which are crossed against suspect's back.
- b) Officer uses the legs against suspect's hips to control movement and to keep suspect trapped.
- c) Officer can trap suspect's arms by wrapping his/her arms over and around suspect's upper arms behind the triceps and clasp the hands.

## **Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting**

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4.      Straight Arm Bar
  - a)      From the guard position, officer places left hand against the front of suspect's left shoulder, near the arm pit.
  - b)      Officer will reach up and under suspect's arm just above the elbow with the right hand and grab his/her own left wrist.
  - c)      Officer will place the right foot against suspect's left hip, straighten his/her left leg, and push against suspect's hip while turning to the left side.
  - d)      The officer's left leg should be behind the suspect's right tricep, across the back.
5.      Single Leg Takedown
  - a)      Officer is on the ground with suspect approaching from the front.
  - b)      Officer traps suspect's leg by wrapping an arm around the ankle and clasping his/her hands.
  - c)      Officer places shoulder against suspect's lower leg (keeping the head inside) and pushes with the shoulder while pulling the ankle toward the chest. The officer may choose to plant a foot on the ground for leverage and power.
6.      Blocking from the Ground
  - a)      Officer is on the ground with suspect attacking from the front (officer is unable to reach suspect's leg for takedown).
  - b)      Officer needs to establish a base by bringing left hand up to protect the head and face, and plant the left foot in front of the body, for protection against kicks and punches.
  - c)      To reinforce the block, officer can bring the right hand up and clasp the left wrist with the right hand.
7.      Side Control
  - a)      With the suspect on the ground on his/her back, the officer will trap suspect's left arm with his/her right arm by wrapping it over and around suspect's left elbow.
  - b)      Officer will hook the suspect's right upper arm underneath the tricep to keep suspect from rolling, and to block punches and gun grabs.
8.      Side Control to Handcuff Position

## **Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting**

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- a) From the side control position, and suspect is attempting to roll away, officer will maintain control of suspect's right elbow to block the roll.
- b) To maintain control and leverage, officer will place his/her left foot over suspect's torso and plant on the ground.
- c) Officer will grab suspect's left wrist with his/her right hand, release the suspect's right elbow, and quickly pass suspect's left wrist to his/her left hand.
- d) Officer will move his/her body over to suspect's left side, keeping body weight on suspect's back, and plant his/her right hand on back of suspect's hip to prevent standing.
- e) Officer will then pull suspect's left arm out and behind the back, while moving to a rear mount position. The officer will control arm movement by placing the left knee/thigh against suspect's elbow.

### **J. Escape Techniques**

The primary purpose of the following techniques is for the officer, while on the ground and underneath a subject, to escape a dangerous and potentially deadly attack.

#### **1. Escape from Mount Position**

- a) When the suspect is mounted on top of the officer with knees on either side of the torso, the officer can first raise the hips to disrupt suspect's balance.
- b) The officer can wrap his/her right arm above and around the suspect's left elbow/upper arm, and trap the suspect's left foot with officer's right foot/leg.
- c) The officer will plant the left foot and place the left hand near the suspect's pelvic/hip area, raise the hips and roll suspect to the officer's right side.

#### **2. Guard-to-Stand**

- a) Officer will keep suspect's head close to the officer's chest by pulling downward at the back of suspect's head/neck, and wrapping the other arm over and around suspect's elbow/tricep.
- b) Officer's feet will be against suspect's hip flexors. At officer's discretion, he/she can then push suspect away and stand.

#### **3. Breaking the Bear Hug/Rear – Arms Pinned**

## **Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting**

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- a) If the suspect bear hugs the officer from the rear pinning the arms, the officer will drop his/her weight and at the same time raise the arms/shoulders.
  - b) This will cause the suspect's grip to loosen and slip farther upward. The officer can then step wide to the outside, then behind suspect's legs with the inside leg, and place the arm across suspect's lower abdomen/pelvic region.
  - c) Officer then pulls back against the suspect bringing suspect to the ground.
  - d) If officer does not wish to take suspect to the ground, then once the officer steps behind the suspect, the officer can drop his/her center of gravity, drop under and turn away from suspect's arms.
4. Breaking the Bear Hug/Front – Arms Pinned
- a) If the suspect bear hugs the officer from the front pinning the arms, the officer can place hands, fingers, or fists against the hip flexor area of the suspect and push forward.
  - b) This will cause balance disruption and allow the officer to deliver knee strikes to the femoral motor nerve area and escape.
5. Breaking the Standing Guillotine Choke
- a) As the officer is being choked, he/she must quickly reach over and pull downward on the shoulder of the suspect opposite the choke side, while pulling downward on the choking arm.
  - b) While pulling downward on suspect's shoulder, the officer will move the opposite hand from suspect's arm to suspect's front thigh just above the knee.
  - c) The officer will push forward above the knee and look up while pulling down on the shoulder, which will block the choke.
  - d) The officer may then deliver knee strikes until suspect releases the hold.
- NOTE: Question: Could a choke-hold on an officer be justification for lethal force?**
6. Breaking the Guillotine Choke from the Guard
- a) From the guard position, the officer must reach over and pull up on the shoulder of the suspect opposite the choke side, and get up on the

## Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting

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feet.

- b) The officer will then walk to the side opposite the choke putting body weight against the suspect. This will cause great pressure against the back of the suspect's neck and head, effecting the release of the hold.

### K. Weapon Retention Techniques

In 2005, the latest year for which stats are available through the FBI, of the 50 officers killed feloniously with firearms, **six law enforcement officers were killed with their own weapons. Over the last ten years, more than ten percent of officers killed in the line of duty by firearms were killed with their own duty pistols** (the highest year was 2003, in which eleven of the 45 officers were killed with their own pistols, totaling 24%). Numbers only tell part of the story and are cold and impersonal. These incidents include:<sup>12</sup>

- Officer James Prince from North Carolina, killed with his own pistol during a traffic stop.
- Sergeant Hoyt Teasley from Georgia, killed after a suspect assaulted another deputy and obtained a duty pistol while in a correctional facility.
- Detective Sergeant James Allen from Rhode Island, disarmed and killed while interviewing a suspect inside police headquarters.
- Lieutenant James Weaver from Virginia, killed by a juvenile suspect during a prisoner transport.
- Deputy Claudia Killebrew from Montgomery County (TN) Sheriff's Office was attacked and disarmed by a female assailant while responding to a call. The assailant fired two shots at Deputy Killebrew—the deputy sprayed the assailant with pepper spray and recovered her weapon.
- In Cleveland, a suspect grabbed an officer's gun at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport and shot another patrolman in the chest at the United Airlines ticket counter after ticket agents called about the suspect's behavior.

Officers should be made aware that an attack which includes an attempt to disarm an officer should be considered a lethal force confrontation. Therefore, the officer is justified in using proportional force (up to and including lethal) to respond to the attack.

Officers should also regularly check the condition of their leather gear/duty equipment. No holster system is foolproof and is potentially the weakest link in a weapon retention situation. No matter what "threat level" holster is worn by an

## **Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting**

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officer, it can fail or be damaged during a confrontation. If an officer's holster is damaged, worn, or seemingly defective, it should be replaced immediately.

### **1. Arm Bar from the Guard**

- a) Suspect is in the officer's guard and reaches for officer's weapon.
- b) Officer first traps suspect's hand/wrist with a defensive grip using the right hand.
- c) Officer wraps the left hand over suspect's left elbow, pulling it forward.
- d) Officer then grabs his/her right wrist, locking the suspect's arm.

### **2. Retention from Full Mount**

- a) If the officer is supine and the assailant attempts a disarm from a full mount, the officer traps and pushes the weapon into the holster.
- b) The officer will raise the upper body enough to be able to bring the non-gun hand/arm underneath the assailant's arm, wrapping back over, and placing the palm of the hand on the back of his/her own head (this creates a modified trap of the assailant's arm).
- c) The officer will raise the hips and roll toward the shoulder closest to the suspect, and into a prone position—maintaining control of the weapon.
- d) The officer strikes the assailant repeatedly enough to loosen the assailant's grip (or effect the release), allowing the officer to disengage and stand.

### **3. Retention from Side-Mount (non-gun side)**

- a) If the officer is supine and the assailant attempts a disarm by reaching across the officer's body from the side, the officer traps and pushes the weapon into the holster.
- b) The officer will raise the upper body enough to be able to bring the non-gun hand/arm underneath the assailant's arm, wrapping back over, and placing the palm of the hand on the back of his/her own head (this creates a modified trap of the assailant's arm).
- c) The officer will roll toward the shoulder closest to the suspect, and into a prone position—maintaining control of the weapon.

## Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting

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- d) The officer strikes the assailant repeatedly enough to loosen the assailant's grip (or effect the release), allowing the officer to disengage and stand.
- 4. Retention from Side-Mount (gun side)
  - a) If the assailant attempts a disarm from the gun side of the officer, the officer traps and pushes the weapon into the holster and rolls on his/her side toward the assailant (using the ground to help retention).
  - b) The officer can then deliver repeated strikes to the assailant to effect the release and disengage.

**“Train to fight as though you are an old man, because one day you will be.” —Helio Gracie**

### III. Conclusion

#### A. Summary

**NOTE: Show slides, “Training Objectives.”**

During this course, students have been introduced to several important areas of ground defense, escape, and control techniques. Additionally, students have participated in numerous practical exercises utilizing learned techniques. Specifically, the following areas were addressed:

- 1. Proper and false assumptions concerning defensive tactics training
- 2. Use of force issues and case law
- 3. Ground defense confrontation statistics
- 4. Mental preparation
- 5. Escapes from mount and side-mount positions
- 6. Weapon retention techniques from the guard, standing, and ground positions
- 7. Defeating tackles and grabs
- 8. Defeating chokes

#### B. Questions

**NOTE: Show slide, “Questions.”**

#### C. Closing Statement



## **Subject Control Arrest Techniques: Ground Fighting**

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The various escapes, countermeasures, and controls presented in this course are for officer survival and subject control. They are only to be used in the proper context and must always follow established and judicially recognized use of force protocol.

It is further recommended that officers consult their individual agency administrators concerning the compatibility of these techniques with their departmental policies.

**“The final weapon is the brain.”**—John Steinbeck

**TRAIN HARD, STAY FIT, STAY ALIVE!**

### **NOTES**

1 John Combs, "Specialized Subject Control and Arrest Techniques," *Basic Law Enforcement Training Manual* (Salemberg, NC: North Carolina Justice Academy, July 2005), 10-11.

2 Larry Smith, "Use of Force," *Use of Force Instructor Certification Manual* (Twin Lakes, WI: National Criminal Justice Training Council, March 2002), 3.

3 Ibid., 10.

4 Ibid., 12-13.

5 Michael J. McGuinness, "Judging Split Second Decisions," *Police Magazine*, January 2000, 111-114.

6 U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Use of Force* (Glynco, GA: Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, January 2006), 19.

7 Georgia Peace Officer Training Council, *Defensive Tactics*, 7.3-10, 12, 13.

8 Combs, 11-13.

9 U.S. Department of Justice, *Use of Force by Police* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 1999), 54.

10 Mark S. Dunston, "Ground Fighting: Assaults on Police Officers" (lecture given at the ASLET International Training Conference, 12 February 2001), Orlando, FL.

11 Georgia Peace Officer Training Council, *Defensive Tactics*, 7.3 – 15.

12 "Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted" (U.S. Department of Justice: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2005) [On-line] Available at: <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/killed/2005/table14.htm> [June 2009].